



Uplands or Wetlands?

Did anyone fail to note the full page ad in last week's *Clipper*? It read, "Massachusetts' #1 Home Seller...is making tracks to the South Shore...Our latest station: Duxbury. To join the train to the future, call..." Did anyone fail to see it as a wake-up call? The pressures on Duxbury are intensifying. This town of somewhat more than 5,000 residential units has room for 4,000 more. It won't be long before all our developable land is built out. If we are to save our open space, it's now or never.

By voting "yes" on June 1 and 13, we have a chance to add 4 important pieces of land to our Western and Central Greenbelts. The parcels represent a spectrum of soil and vegetation types, which brings to mind the classic question: uplands or wetlands?

Some people think we should buy only uplands because they assume wetlands are protected by law and therefore "safe". But the law permits developers to "engineer" wetlands - build dikes and bridge and "replicate" wetlands in one place in exchange for destroying them in another. We have all seen houses go up on land we thought was unbuildable. The only sure way to preserve land is to own it.

Other people think we should buy only wetlands because they are less expensive - we get more land for fewer dollars. For example, why not just buy the wetland portion of Camp Wing and let the developer have the 55 acres of upland? The fact is that the uplands are very valuable, and not just for building. They protect the streams from runoff and provide a more richly diverse environment for wildlife. In the case of the Camp Wing land, the upland portion provides the nesting and foraging habitat required for the survival of some otherwise wetland species, such as green herons and red-shouldered hawks. If the upland were lost, the value of the rest would be immeasurably diminished.

The original greenbelt plan recognized the importance of diversity by seeking to acquire both watersheds and their adjacent uplands. The Mayflower, Union, Summer St., and Camp Wing parcels are the next pieces toward completing that plan. Go see for yourself at "open houses" on all 4 parcels on 3 Sundays, May 24 and 31 and June 7 from 1-4 pm. Attend the presentation by the Conservation Commission to be held in the Merry Meeting Room at the library on Tuesday, May 26, at 7:30 pm. Then vote yes - twice - first at the special town meeting June 1 and then at the polls June 13.

If you want to help with Friends of Conservation, contact us at PO Box 1528 or call Dot Baker (934-2302) or Kay Foster (934-2663).